EPIC COMICS
THE
SISTERHOOD
OF
STEEL
SISTERHOOD OF STEEL 3
APRIL 1985
$1.50
$1.75
CANADA
MARVEL
Mike Vosburg

creator / writer
CHRISTY MARX

creator / artist
MIKE VOSBURG

letterer
TOM ORZECHOWSKI
L. LOIS BUHALIS

EPIC COMICS

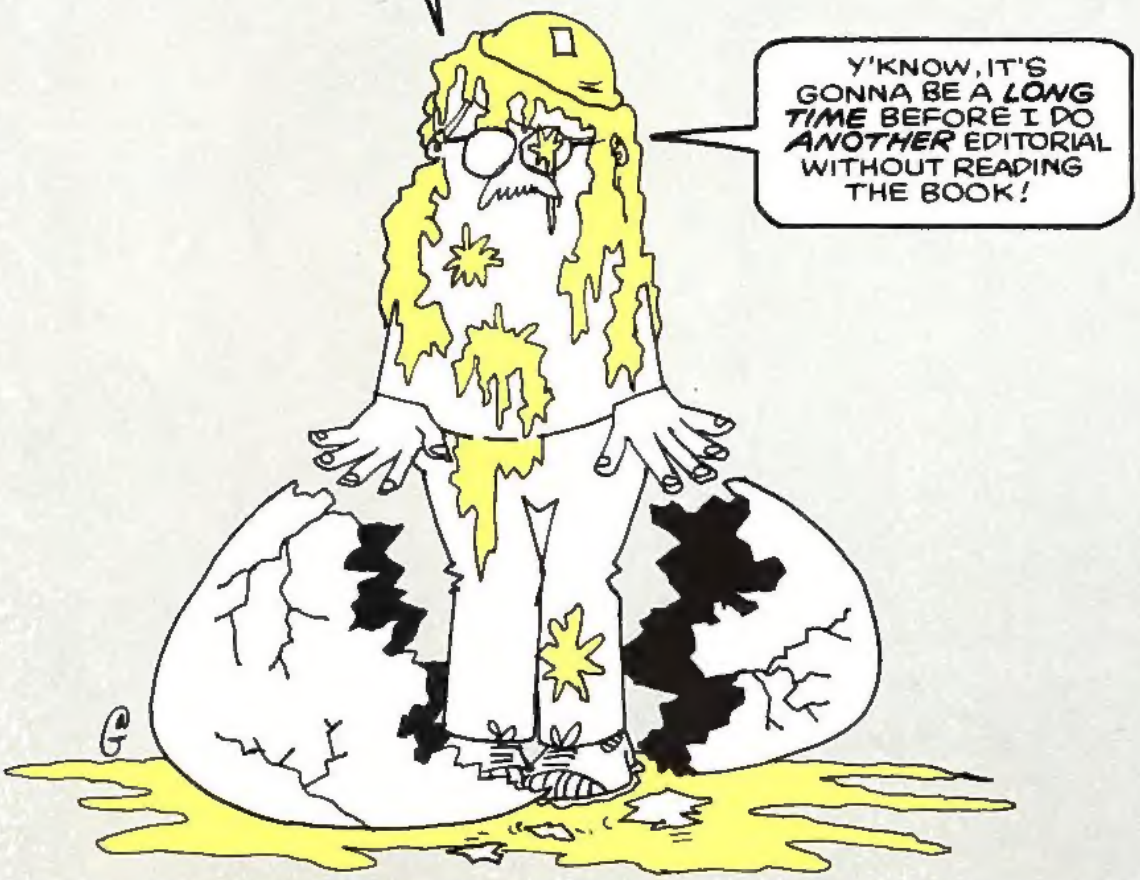
associate editor
LAURIE SUTTON

editor
ARCHIE GOODWIN

logo design
PETER LEDGER

consulting editor
JIM SHOOTER

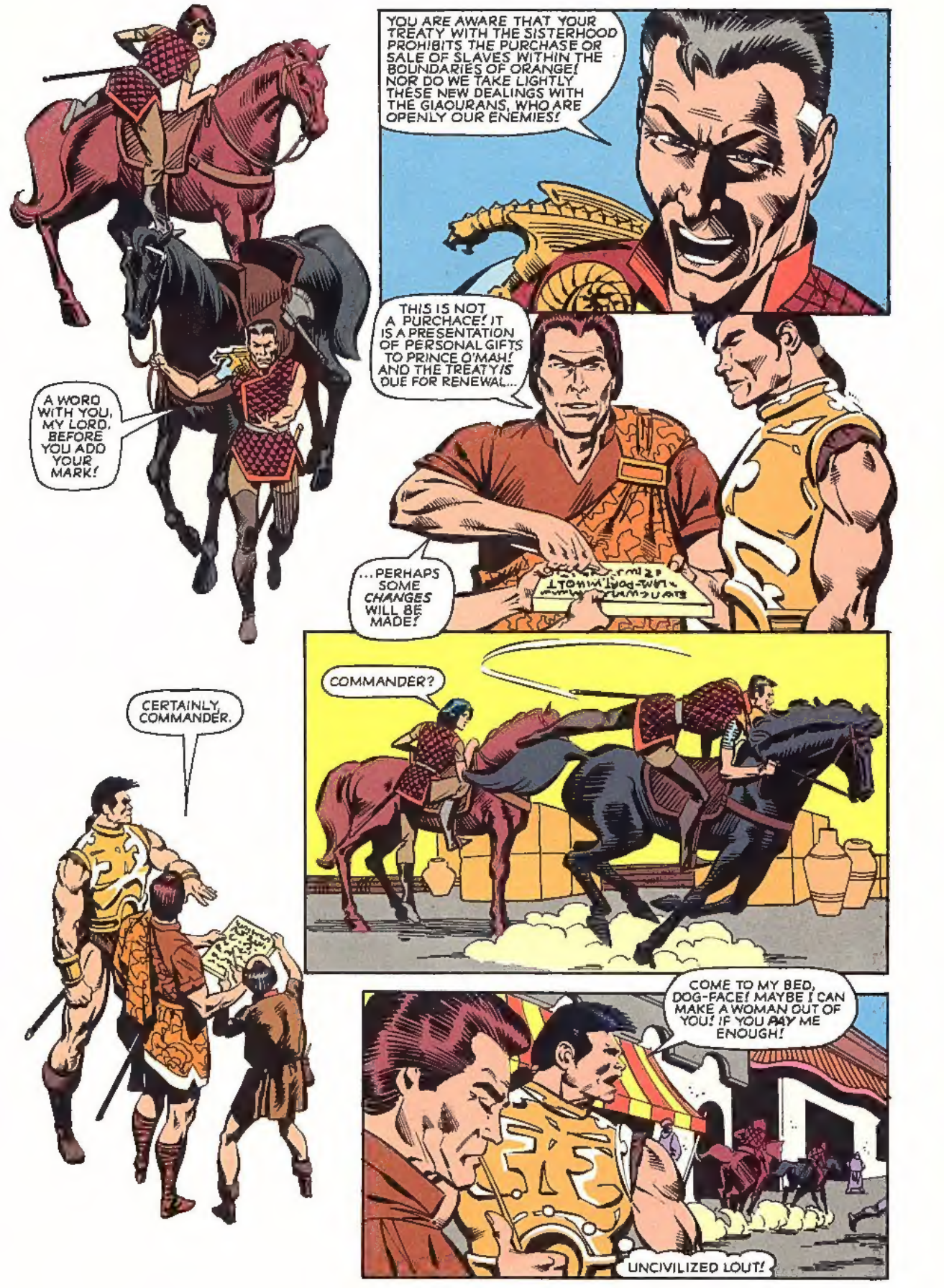
I'M ARCHIE GOODWIN, EDITOR OF MARVEL'S ***EPIC COMICS*** LINE AND THINGS ARE REALLY HOPPIN' HERE! WE'RE PRODUCING GREAT NEW TITLES LEFT AN' RIGHT. AMAZING STUFF LIKE CHRIS CLAREMONT AND JOHN BOLTON'S SWORD AND SORCERY SAGA, ***BLACK DRAGON***; SERGIO ARAGONES' HYSTERICAL BARBARIAN, ***GROO THE WANDERER***; AND MARC DE MATTEIS AND JAY MUTH'S WITTY AND MOVING ***MOONSHADOW***. YOU WANT VARIETY IN FANTASY MATERIAL... ***EPIC'S*** GOT IT. MATTER OF FACT, WE'VE BEEN SO BUSY WITH THE WHOLE LINE, I HAVEN'T HAD A CHANCE TO ***READ*** THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE OF ***SISTERHOOD OF STEEL*** YET. BUT THAT'S WHY WE HAVE DEPENDABLE CREATORS LIKE CHRISTY MARX AND MIKE VOSBURG AND SAVVY EDITORS LIKE LAURIE SUTTON AND MARGARET CLARK. I JUST SAID TO THEM: "HEY, GANG, WHAT CAN I DO MUCHO QUICKLY FOR THIS EDITORIAL THAT RELATES TO A ***SCENE*** IN THIS ISSUE?"



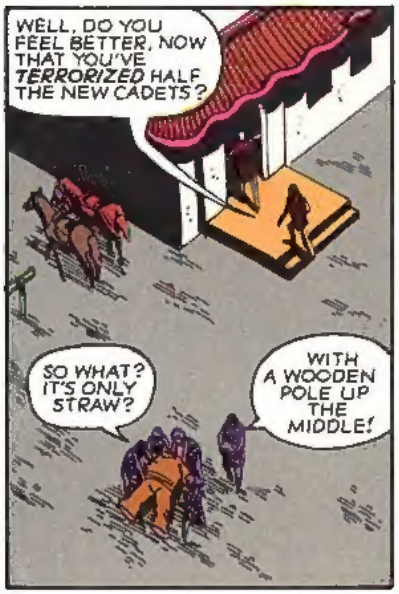
SISTERHOOD OF STEEL™ Vol. 1, No. 3, April, 1985. Published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP, James E. Galton, President; Stan Lee, Publisher; Michael Hobson, Vice-President, Publishing; Milton Schiffman, Vice-President, Production. Office of Publication: 387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. Published bi-monthly. SISTERHOOD OF STEEL™ (including all prominent characters featured in this issue) and the distinctive likenesses thereof are the trademarks of Christy Marx and Mike Vosburg. "Epic Comics" is a registered trademark of the Marvel Comics Group, a division of Cadence Industries Corporation. All SISTERHOOD OF STEEL™ material copyright ©1985 Christy Marx and Mike Vosburg. All other material © 1985 Marvel Comics Group. All rights reserved. Price $1.50 per copy in the US and $1.75 in Canada. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons and / or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the condition that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. Printed in Canada.

SISTERS, SECRETS & SLAVES
THE MASSIVE FORTRESS OF THE SISTERHOOD STRADDLES CIVIL ROAD. THE DIVIDING LINE BETWEEN THE TWIN CITIES OF ORANGE...
AND PHYRUS.
PHYRUS IS FAMOUS FOR ITS BRILLIANT PURPLE DYES, ITS ARTISTS AND ARTISANS, WINES, OILS AND HARDWOODS.
ORANGE IS RICH FROM THE PRODUCTS OF ITS MINES, ESPECIALLY QUICKSILVER, VITAL IN MEDICINES, ORANGE DYES AND THE AMALGAMATION OF GOLD AND SILVER.
ORANGE-PHYRUS HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE SISTERHOOD'S MOST SECURE OUTPOST BEYOND THE SHORE OF THEIR ISLAND-HOME, ILDANA.
THIS IS ABOUT TO CHANGE.
CAREFUL WITH THAT!
DROP IT AND THE MASTER WILL HAVE YOU FLAYED!
BY SHATH'S HAIRIES! THE GIAOURANS* ARE UNLOADING SLAVES!
*GIAOUR-PRONOUNCED LIKE THE FRENCH "JOUR." -C.M.

LOOK AT THE COCKY YOUNG BASTARD STRUT, AELIN! THINKS HE OWNS THE PLACE!
WHO'S THE COURT SLUG HE'S MEETING?
LORD POLIPPE, THE PRINCE'S FINANCIAL ADVISOR. COMES FROM A RICH FAMILY. LOTS OF CONNECTIONS.
CAPTAIN BENIGNUS, I PRESUME?
I AM PRINCE BENIGNUS, HEIR TO THE THRONE OF GIAOUR!
YOU'RE PRINCE O'MAH'S MAN?
I'M LORD POLIPPE, HIS LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR THIS TRANSACTION. I'VE RECORDED THE ACCEPTANCE OF 200 MALE SLAVES IN GOOD CONDITION AND ONE LARGE BOX. DO YOU WISH TO DECLARE THE CONTENTS?
NO.
Ah, QUITE. YOUR FATHER, LORD ANDRAS...
KING ANDRAS!
Ah, QUITE. PRESS YOUR THUMB HERE, PLEASE! THANK YOU.
YOUR FATHER AND MY PRINCE AWAIT US AT...
LORD POLIPPE!


A WORD WITH YOU, MY LORD, BEFORE YOU ADD YOUR MARK!
YOU ARE AWARE THAT YOUR TREATY WITH THE SISTERHOOD PROHIBITS THE PURCHASE OR SALE OF SLAVES WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF ORANGE! NOR DO WE TAKE LIGHTLY THESE NEW DEALINGS WITH THE GIAOURANS, WHO ARE OPENLY OUR ENEMIES!
THIS IS NOT A PURCHACE! IT IS A PRESENTATION OF PERSONAL GIFTS TO PRINCE O'MAH! AND THE TREATY *IS* DUE FOR RENEWAL...
...PERHAPS SOME *CHANGES* WILL BE MADE!
COMMANDER?
CERTAINLY, COMMANDER.
COME TO MY BED, DOG-FACE! MAYBE I CAN MAKE A WOMAN OUT OF YOU! IF YOU PAY ME ENOUGH!
UNCIVILIZED LOUT!

GLESPA! TALK TO ME!
GLESSIE!
OH, FOR THE LOVE OF...
GIIIE--
--YEAAGHH!
GODDESS! THE OLD BOAR'S IN AN UPROAR TODAY!
YEAH, MAYBE SHE SAW OUR ROOM!


WELL, DO YOU FEEL BETTER, NOW THAT YOU'VE *TERRORIZED* HALF THE NEW CADETS?
SO WHAT? IT'S ONLY STRAW?
WITH A WOODEN POLE UP THE MIDDLE!

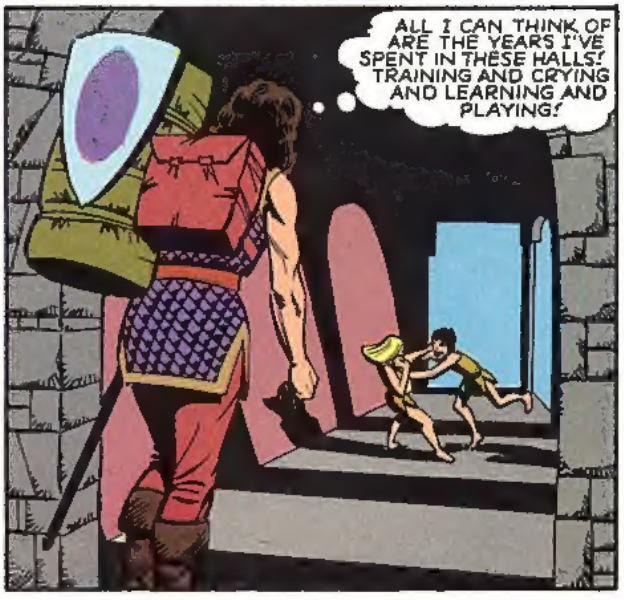
YES! NO, GODDESS SAVE ME FROM BUREAUCRATS! WHEN ARE GILL AND AMBYRE SUPPOSED TO GET HERE?
SOON!

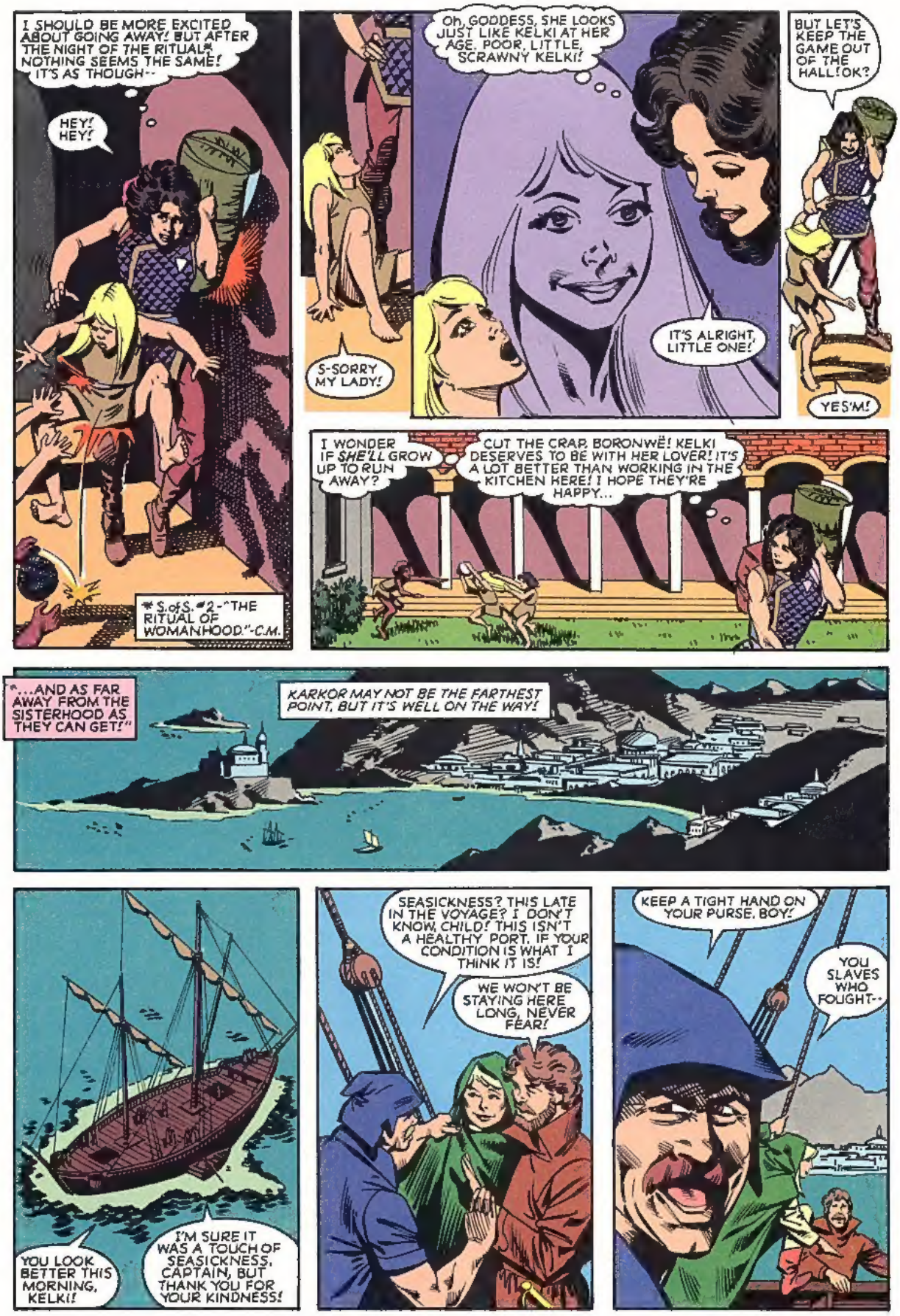
THEY'RE SAILING WITH A LAST SHIP OF CADETS! WITH ANY LUCK, THEY'LL BE HERE DAY AFTER TOMORROW!
GOOD! THEY *MIGHT* GET HERE BEFORE I *KILL* SOMEONE!

AELIN SIGHS. SHE KNOWS GLESPA MUST GROWL WHEN SHE CAN'T BITE! ALL THE SAME, SHE HOPES IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE...

I *SHOULD* BE READY! SPENT MY WHOLE LIFE GETTING READY TO LEAVE THIS PLACE! BUT NOW THAT I AM, IT SUDDENLY FEELS LIKE *HOME!* FUNNY... I THOUGHT I'D BE SO GLAD TO LEAVE!

...THE SHIP LEAVES AT NOON BELLS! GUESS I'M READY!


ALL I CAN THINK OF ARE THE YEARS I'VE SPENT IN THESE HALLS! TRAINING AND CRYING AND LEARNING AND PLAYING!


I SHOULD BE MORE EXCITED ABOUT GOING AWAY! BUT AFTER THE NIGHT OF THE RITUAL*, NOTHING SEEMS THE SAME! IT'S AS THOUGH--
HEY! HEY!
*S.of S. #2-"THE RITUAL OF WOMANHOOD"-C.M.
Oh, GODDESS, SHE LOOKS JUST LIKE KELKI AT HER AGE. POOR, LITTLE, SCRAWNY KELKI!
S-SORRY MY LADY!
IT'S ALRIGHT, LITTLE ONE!
BUT LET'S KEEP THE GAME OUT OF THE HALL! OK?
YES'M!
I WONDER IF SHE'LL GROW UP TO RUN AWAY?
CUT THE CRAP, BORONWË! KELKI DESERVES TO BE WITH HER LOVER! IT'S A LOT BETTER THAN WORKING IN THE KITCHEN HERE! I HOPE THEY'RE HAPPY...
"...AND AS FAR AWAY FROM THE SISTERHOOD AS THEY CAN GET!"
KARKOR MAY NOT BE THE FARTHEST POINT, BUT IT'S WELL ON THE WAY!
YOU LOOK BETTER THIS MORNING, KELKI!
I'M SURE IT WAS A TOUCH OF SEASICKNESS, CAPTAIN, BUT THANK YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS!
SEASICKNESS? THIS LATE IN THE VOYAGE? I DON'T KNOW, CHILD! THIS ISN'T A HEALTHY PORT. IF YOUR CONDITION IS WHAT I THINK IT IS!
WE WON'T BE STAYING HERE LONG, NEVER FEAR!
KEEP A TIGHT HAND ON YOUR PURSE, BOY!
YOU SLAVES WHO FOUGHT--

--AGAINST THE PIRATES! YOU'RE FREEMEN NOW!
THOSE WHO WISH TO LEAVE SHIP AT KARKOR SHOULD COME FORWARD!
I'M FOR LEAVIN' THIS FLOATIN' CHAMBER POT!
THOUGHT IT WAS YOU WHAT SMELLED LIKE A CHAMBER POT, OLD RATTY!
ACHG! YOU'LL END UP IN CHAINS AGAIN! WAIT AND SEE!
AND WHAT ABOUT THEM WAGES YOU PROMISED?
PURSER, GIVE HIM HIS WAGES!
AND GOOD RIDDANCE!
I SHOULDN'T HAVE LET OLD RATTY GO WITH THEM! HE KNOWS TOO MUCH ABOUT THEM AND THEIR TROUBLE! AND TROUBLE CAN BE TURNED INTO PROFIT BY HIS KIND!
KARKOR IS A MINOR STOP ON A MINOR TRADE ROUTE, BUT ITS VICES ARE NO LESS FOR IT!
NONE OF THE PORTS THE SISTERHOOD TOOK US TO WERE LIKE THIS! I CAN'T BELIEVE THE FILTH AND THE STINK!
AND THOSE WOMEN! HAVE THEY NO SHAME?

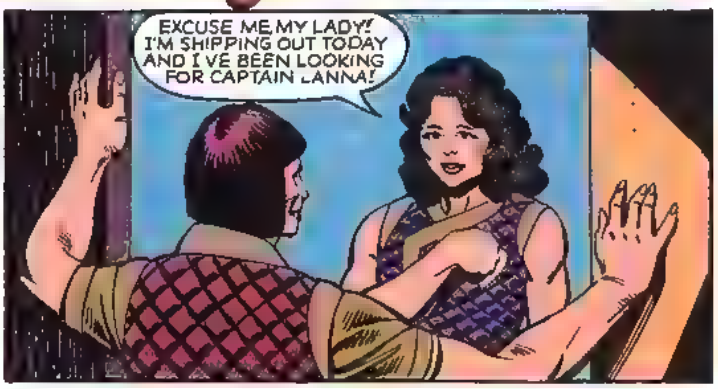
WHO AM I TO THINK OF SHAME? IF NOT FOR VOSSE, I'D BE DRUDGING FOR THE SISTERHOOD!
FIGGERS THEY'D DUMP ME IN A HOLE LIKE THIS! NOT A PURSE WORTH PICKING!
WHAT IF SOMETHING HAPPENS TO VOSSE? HOW ELSE COULD I SUPPORT MYSELF? WHAT OTHER SKILLS DO I HAVE? BY THE GODDESS, I'D--
OH! GODDE- GOODNESS! I DO BEG YOUR PARDON, SISTERS!
YOU WANT SOMETHING?
MY POOR BRIDE IS NOT WELL!
DOES THIS BENIGHTED VILLAGE BOAST AN INN OF ANY WORTH?
YOU CAN TRY THE INN OF THE RED DOOR DOWN HERE. IT HAS A FEW LESS FLEAS!
YOU'RE SO KIND!
THAT'S 'CAUSE MOST OF THE FLEAS LEFT WITH US!
YOU KNOW WHERE YOU CAN SHOVE IT, NEESA!
DON'T TREMBLE SO, MY LOVE! THEY'RE LEAVING!

WHY WOULD THEY BE HERE UNLESS-
IF THEY WERE AFTER US, WE WOULDN'T BE WALKING AWAY! DID YOU RECOGNIZE EITHER OF THEM?
NO! THEY'RE OLDER GIRLS! BUT IT'S SO HARD TO TELL! THEY MIGHT KNOW ME!

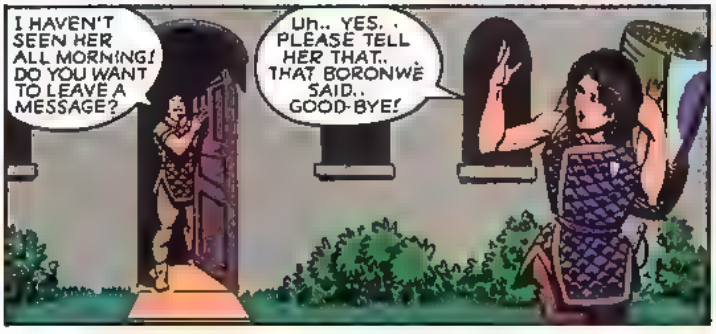
WE'VE GOT TO LEAVE NOW! RIGHT AWAY!
THAT WOULD ONLY DRAW MORE ATTENTION TO US!
YOU NEED REST AND I HAVE ARRANGEMENTS TO MAKE!

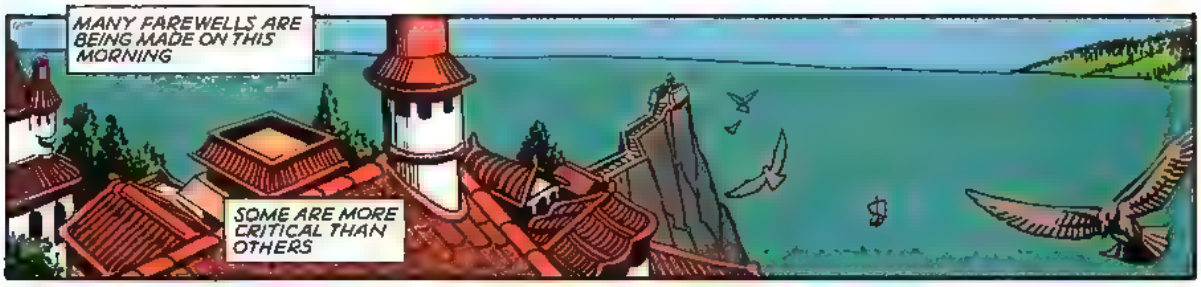
IT'S TOO SOON FOR THE SISTERHOOD TO HAVE SEARCH PARTIES THIS FAR AWAY! AND IN A COUPLE OF DAYS, WE'LL BE GONE!
NOW AIN'T THAT INTERESTIN'!

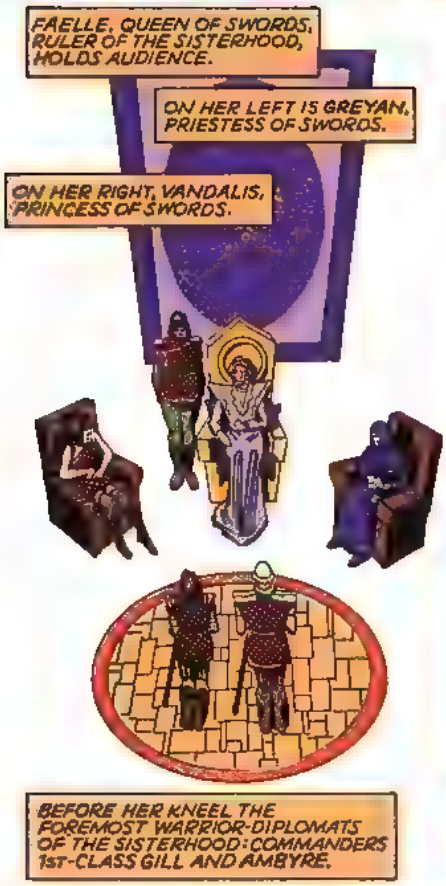
I HEAR THE FIRST SET OF LOADING BELLS! I SHOULD HAVE JUST ENOUGH TIME!

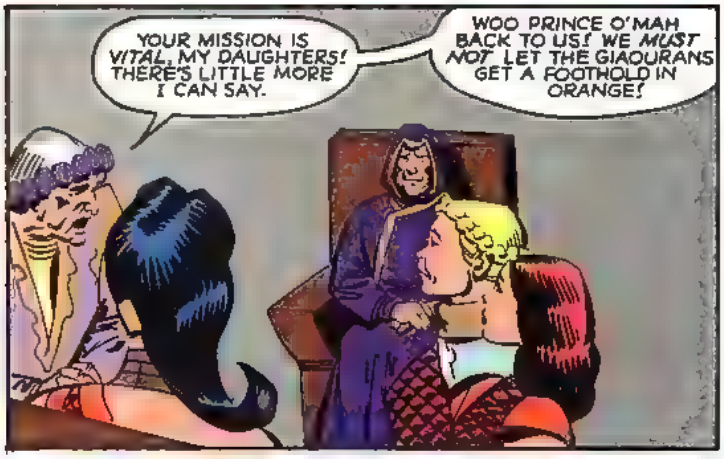

EXCUSE ME, MY LADY! I'M SHIPPING OUT TODAY AND I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR CAPTAIN LANNA!

IS SHE HERE?
I'M AFRAID NOT!


I HAVEN'T SEEN HER ALL MORNING! DO YOU WANT TO LEAVE A MESSAGE?
Uh.. YES. . PLEASE TELL HER THAT.. THAT BORONWE SAID.. GOOD-BYE!


MANY FAREWELLS ARE BEING MADE ON THIS MORNING
SOME ARE MORE CRITICAL THAN OTHERS

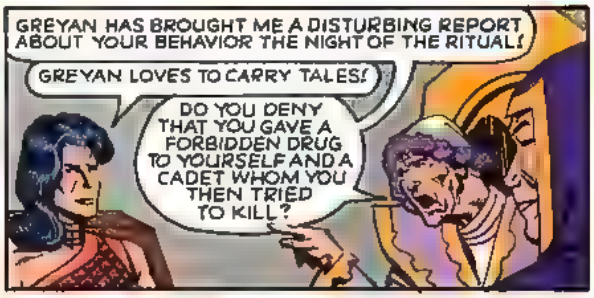

FAELLE, QUEEN OF SWORDS, RULER OF THE SISTERHOOD, HOLDS AUDIENCE.
ON HER LEFT IS GREYAN, PRIESTESS OF SWORDS.
ON HER RIGHT, VANDALIS, PRINCESS OF SWORDS.
BEFORE HER KNEEL THE FOREMOST WARRIOR-DIPLOMATS OF THE SISTERHOOD: COMMANDERS 1ST-CLASS GILL AND AMBYRE.


YOUR MISSION IS VITAL, MY DAUGHTERS! THERE'S LITTLE MORE I CAN SAY.
WOO PRINCE O'MAH BACK TO US! WE MUST NOT LET THE GIAOURANS GET A FOOTHOLD IN ORANGE!

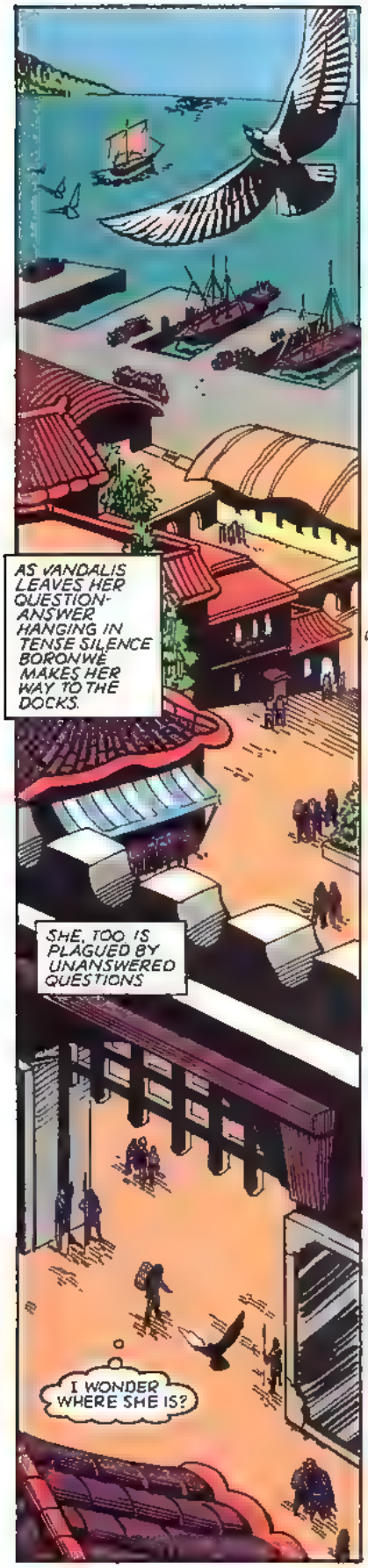
THE FUTURE OF THE SISTERHOOD DEPENDS UPON THE SUCCESSFUL RENEGOTIATION OF OUR TREATIES WITH ORANGE AND PHYRUS! DO NOT FAIL US!

WE PLEDGE OUR BLOOD AND OUR SWORDS TO THE FULFILLMENT OF OUR TASK, MY QUEEN!
THE GODDESS BE WITH YOU!

YOU MUST GO OUT, TOO.
SEE THAT NO ONE INTERRUPTS US!


GREYAN HAS BROUGHT ME A DISTURBING REPORT ABOUT YOUR BEHAVIOR THE NIGHT OF THE RITUAL!
GREYAN LOVES TO CARRY TALES!
DO YOU DENY THAT YOU GAVE A FORBIDDEN DRUG TO YOURSELF AND A CADET WHOM YOU THEN TRIED TO KILL?

AND IF I DENY IT... WHO WILL YOU BELIEVE THEN?


AS VANDALIS LEAVES HER QUESTION-ANSWER HANGING IN TENSE SILENCE BORONWE MAKES HER WAY TO THE DOCKS.
SHE, TOO, IS PLAGUED BY UNANSWERED QUESTIONS
I WONDER WHERE SHE IS?

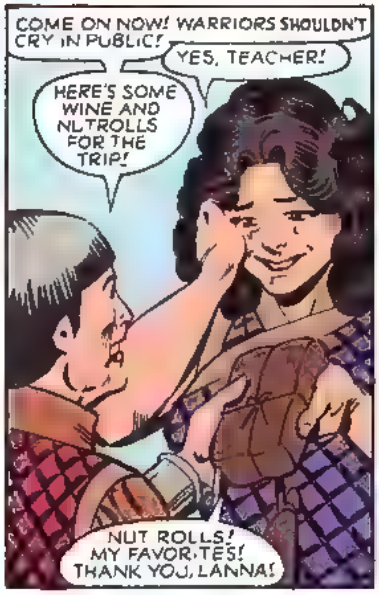
I THOUGHT FOR SURE SHE'D AT LEAST SAY GOOD-BYE!

SHE MUST BE TOO BUSY! WHO AM I ANYWAY? JUST ONE MORE CADET--

BORONWE!

WAKE UP, G'RL!
LANNA!
DIDN'T THINK I'D FORGET, DID YOU?

I


COME ON NOW! WARRIORS SHOULDN'T CRY IN PUBLIC!
YES, TEACHER!
HERE'S SOME WINE AND NUTROLLS FOR THE TRIP!
NUT ROLLS! MY FAVOR-TES! THANK YOU, LANNA!

THANK ME WHEN YOU RETURN, GIRL, ALIVE AND WHOLE! FIGHT WELL, BORONWE!
I WILL, TEACHER! GOOD-BYE!

WITHIN THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER
THAT IS NO ANSWER VANDALIS!
WE COULD BRING IN THE CADET TO HEAR HER SIDE OF THE STORY. Ummm.. HER NAME AGAIN?
YOU'D TAKE THE WORD OF A CADET AGAINST THE PRINCESS OF SWORDS?!
BORONWE!
AND MY WORD!
MY QUEEN, THE CADET IN QUESTION HAS A STRONG PERSONAL LOYALTY TO HER INSTRUCTOR, AND YOU KNOW THE FALSE GRUDGE THAT LANNA BEARS AGAINST ME!
THESE ARE DANGEROUS TIMES FOR THE SISTERHOOD! WE MUST BE STRONG AND UNITED!
YES, WE NEED YOUR STRENGTH. I WILL NOT ROB YOU OF YOUR TITLE! BUT NEITHER CAN THERE BE DOUBT ABOUT THE CHARACTER OF MY SUCCESSOR! I MUST ERR ON THE SIDE OF CAUTION, AND REMOVE YOUR NAME FROM MY DECLARATION OF SUCCESSION
YOU MUST NAME SOMEONE ELSE, FAELLE!
I WILL. GIVE IT MY CONSIDERATION!
LEAVE ME NOW!

THERE GO THE LAST BELLS! I JUST MADE IT!
BORONWE, CADET 1ST-CLASS, MY LADY! I WAS TOLD MY NEW SWORDMATE WOULD BE ASSIGNED HERE.
MEKITA!
YES, CAPTAIN?
I SEE THEM COMING! ARE ALL THE CADETS ACCOUNTED FOR?
ALL BUT ONE!
YOUR NEW SWORDMATE, IN FACT! LET'S SEE, HER NAME IS--
DINDRA, CADET 1ST-CLASS, REPORTING MY LADY! WE CAN SAIL, NOW!
WE WEREN'T HOLDING THE SHIP ON *YOUR* ACCOUNT, YOUNG LADY!
OH, AND THIS IS YOUR SWORDMATE, BORONWE, WHO *MAY* BE ABLE TO TEACH YOU *SOMETHING* ABOUT BEING *ON TIME!*
SO THAT'S HER! FUNNY, SHE LOOKS FAMILIAR!
DINDRA, eh? WHERE DO I KNOW HER FROM?

ATTENTION! OFFICERS BOARDING!

OFFICERS?!

REQUEST PERMISSION TO COME ABOARD, CAPTAIN!

PERMISSION GRANTED!

SHATH'S TEETH! THEY'RE SAILING WITH *US*? I WONDER WHY?

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME!

TOO LONG, ELLIE! IS OUR GEAR ON BOARD?

ALL SET! I MUST SAY HAVING YOU HERE WILL SAVE ME FROM ANOTHER BORING TRIP!

CAST OFF!

OUTSIDE THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER..

A WORD WITH YOU PRIVATELY.

I HAVEN'T LOST! EVEN WITHOUT HER DECLARATION, I'LL BE QUEEN! THERE ISN'T ANYONE TO CHALLENGE ME, AND SHE MAY CHANGE HER MIND AGAIN, BEFORE SHE DIES!

YOU'D DESTROY US IF YOU BECAME QUEEN! YOU PLACE YOUR PERSONAL DESIRES ABOVE YOUR DUTY! THAT MAKES YOU MORE DANGEROUS THAN ANY OUTSIDE THREAT!

THE SISTERHOOD NEEDS MY STRENGTH!

SO YOU KEEP SAYING, BUT THERE ARE DIFFERENT KINDS OF STRENGTH! THAT GIRL, BORONWE HAS A STRENGTH YOU'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND!

PHAGH! SHE'S LANNA'S LITTLE PET!

ENOUGH!

REMEMBER THIS-- I AM THE MISTRESS OF POISONS, WHILE YOU MUST EAT AND DRINK LIKE ANY OF US!

I WILL PROTECT THE SISTERHOOD AT ANY COST!

DEATH THREATS ARE TWO-EDGED, GREYAN! ONE MUST STAY ALIVE TO CARRY THEM OUT!

GUARD THE DOOR BENIGNUS! MAKE SURE NO ONE ENTERS!

IN THE ROYAL PALACE OF ORANGE, ANOTHER GAME OF POWER IS BEING PLAYED.

ANDRAS, SELF-STYLED KING OF THE SLAVERS OF GIAOUR, IS ABOUT TO TEACH HIS UNWITTING PUPIL, PRINCE O'MAH, A MOST TREACHEROUS LESSON.

WE ARE, uh, MOST CURIOUS TO LEARN, uh, THE NATURE OF THIS GIFT, ANDRAS, THAT HAS, uh, REQUIRED SUCH SECRECY!

YES, BUT FIRST. .

BE WARNED! THIS ROOM IS SAFE ENOUGH, BUT YOU MUST *NEVER* LET ANYONE LEARN WHAT IS HELD HERE!

YES! YES! OPEN IT!

OH! SHE *IS* NICE! BUT WHAT'S, un, WRONG WITH HER?

MERELY DRUGGED TO KEEP HER UNDER CONTROL.

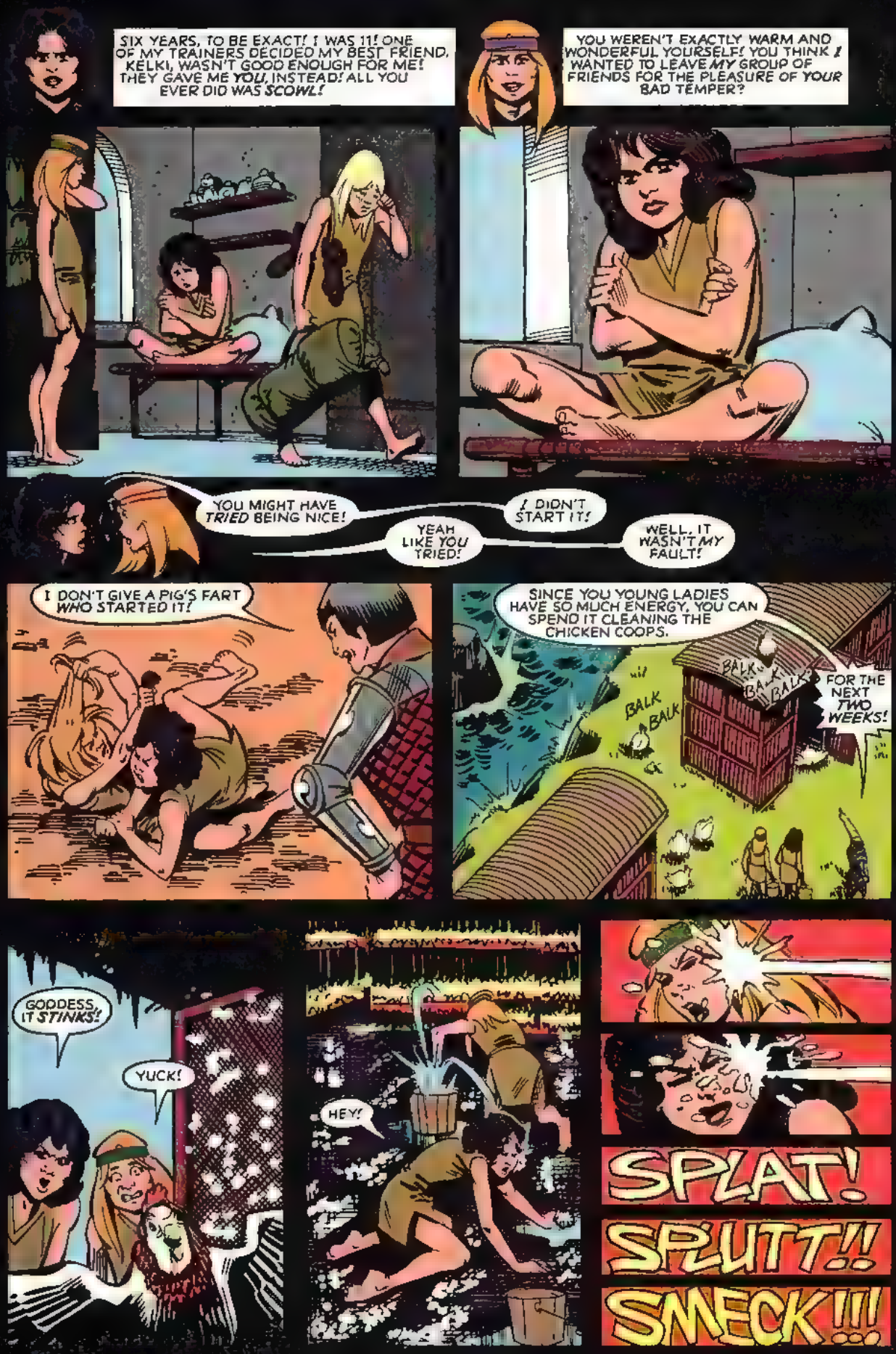
BUT WHAT'S SO, uh, *SPECIAL* ABOUT HER?

SHE IS. *WAS* A CADET OF THE SISTERHOOD!

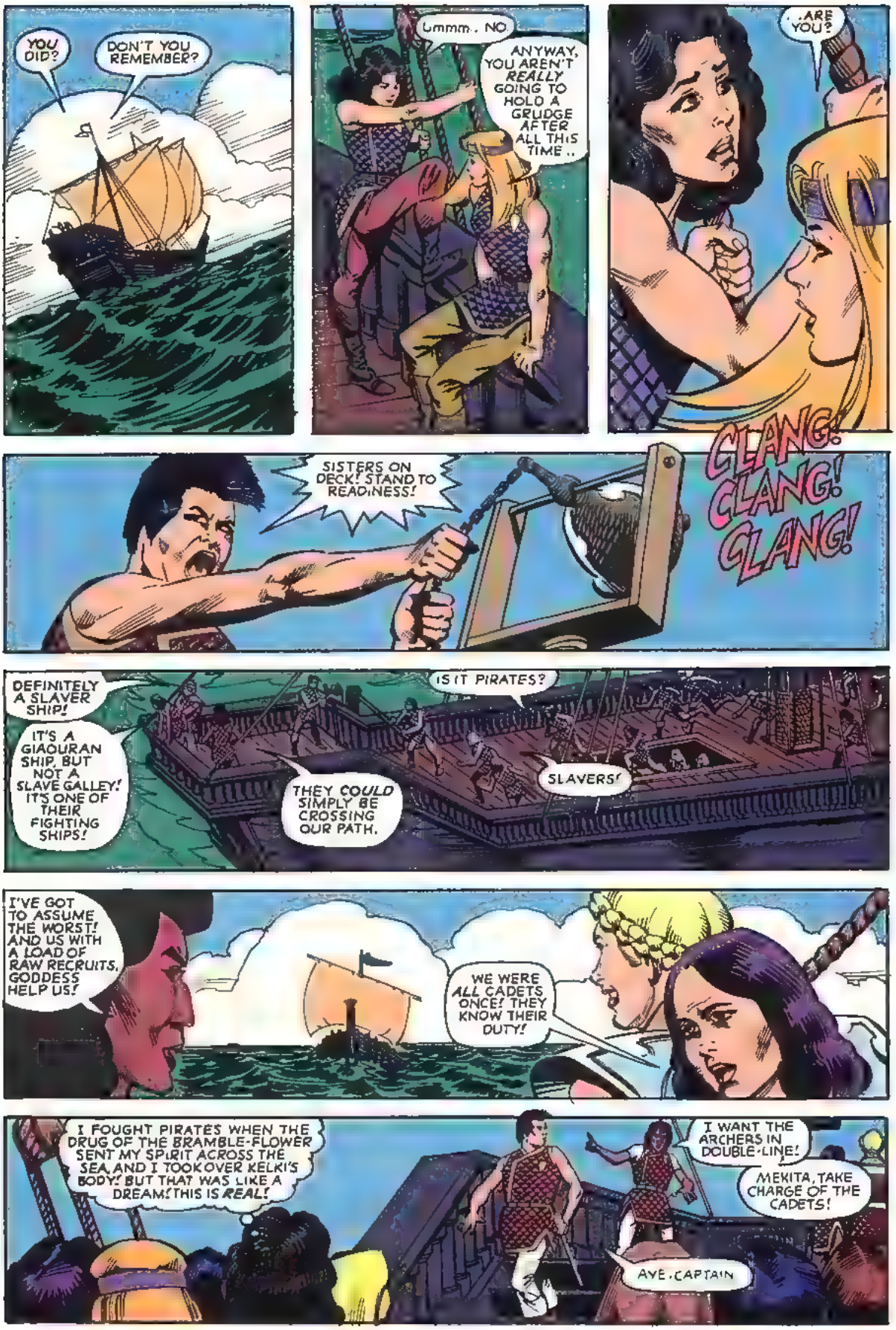
WHAT?! ARE YOU *MAD?* GET HER *OUT* OF HERE!

IMAGINE IT, PRINCE O'MAH, A PROUD WARRIOR OF THE SISTERHOOD, YOURS TO DO WITH AS YOU PLEASE! ANYTHING YOU PLEASE!
B-B-BUT IF SHE ESCAPED! IF SHE TOLD--
WE'VE TAKEN PRECAUTIONS AGAINST THAT, AS YOU CAN SEE FOR YOURSELF! ONLY YOU AND I WILL EVER KNOW!
I USUALLY LIKE THEM BETTER WITH TONGUES, BUT..
..YOU'VE, uh, PLEASED US!
WE ACCEPT YOUR, uh, GRACIOUS GIFT!
DID IT WORK?
THE FOOL IS OURS!
IN KARKOR...
PALI! BEHIND YOU!
DON'T WORRY NONE! I'VE GOT NEWS FOR YA!
GET LOST, CREEP!
BUT YOU'D BE WANTIN' TO KNOW ABOUT ANOTHER SISTER SO FAR FROM HOME! MIGHT EVEN BE WORTH A COIN OR TWO!
ALRIGHT... YOU'VE GOT ONE MINUTE!

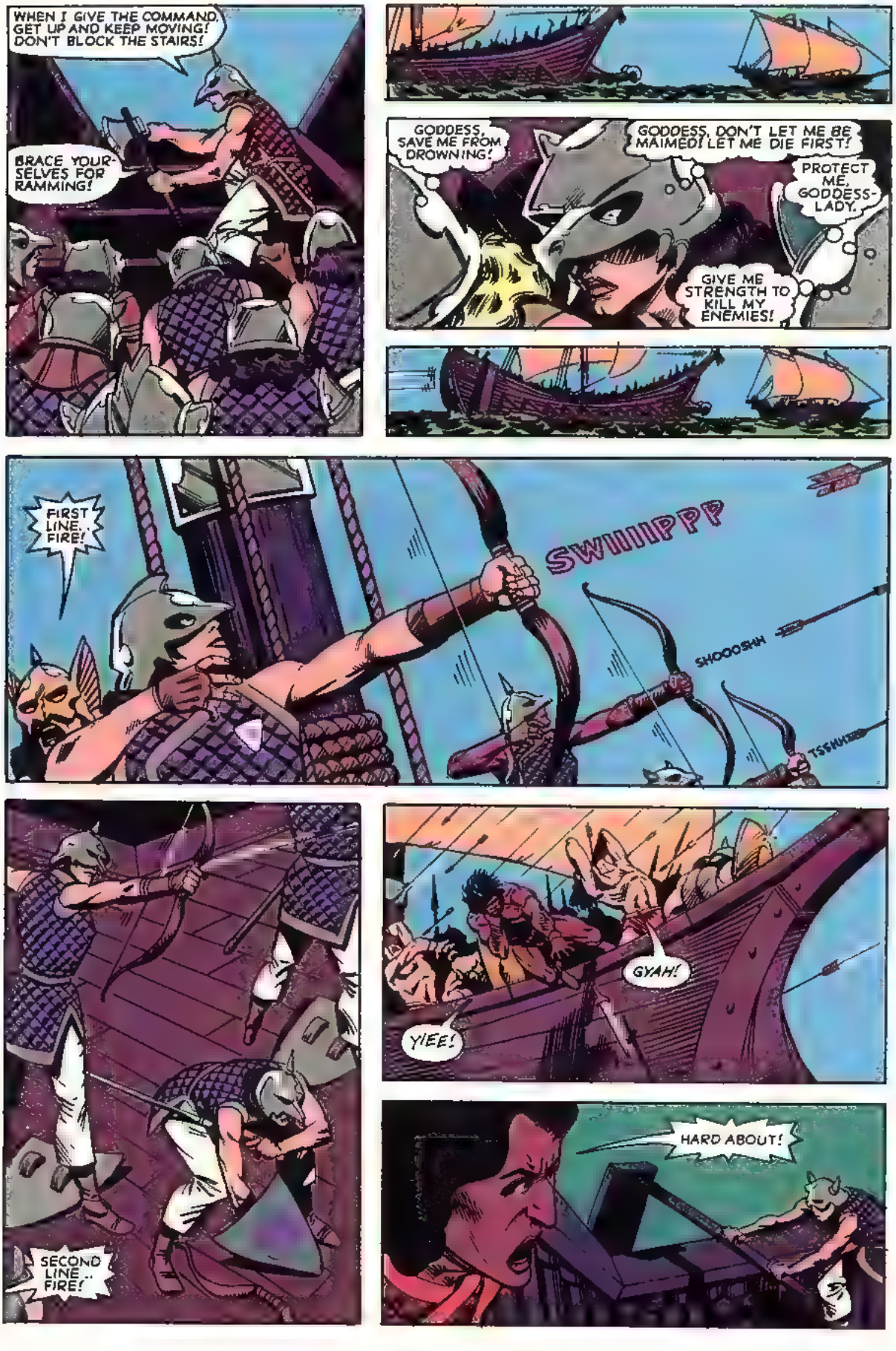
A BLONDE GIRL NAMED KELKI, AND HER MAN, VOSSE! THEY'RE HERE, BUT THEY'RE AFRAID OF YOU! I SAW HER FIGHT PIRATES LIKE A WILD THING! KILLED AND KILLED SHE DID! RUNNIN' FROM THE SISTERHOOD IS MY GUESS! PRETTY BLONDE GIRL WITH BLUE EYES!
ALL RIGHT! BEAT IT!
THANK YOU, SISTERS!
CHEAP BITCHES!
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
WHO KNOWS? WE'LL CHECK IT OUT WITH COMMANDER GLESPA WHEN WE GET BACK.
ILDANA RECEDES FROM SIGHT, BUT BORONWE'S MIND IS FILLED WITH...
I KNOW I KNOW HER.
THAT'S IT!
WHAT'S IT?
THE CHICKEN COOPS!
THE CHICKEN COOPS?
THE ROCKS!
THE ROCKS?
SEE--? IT LEFT A SCAR!
Oh. THAT CHICKEN COOP.
I'LL BE DAMNED IF I'M GOING TO GET STUCK WITH YOU AGAIN!
WAIT A MINUTE! LET'S TALK ABOUT IT AT LEAST!
IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO--

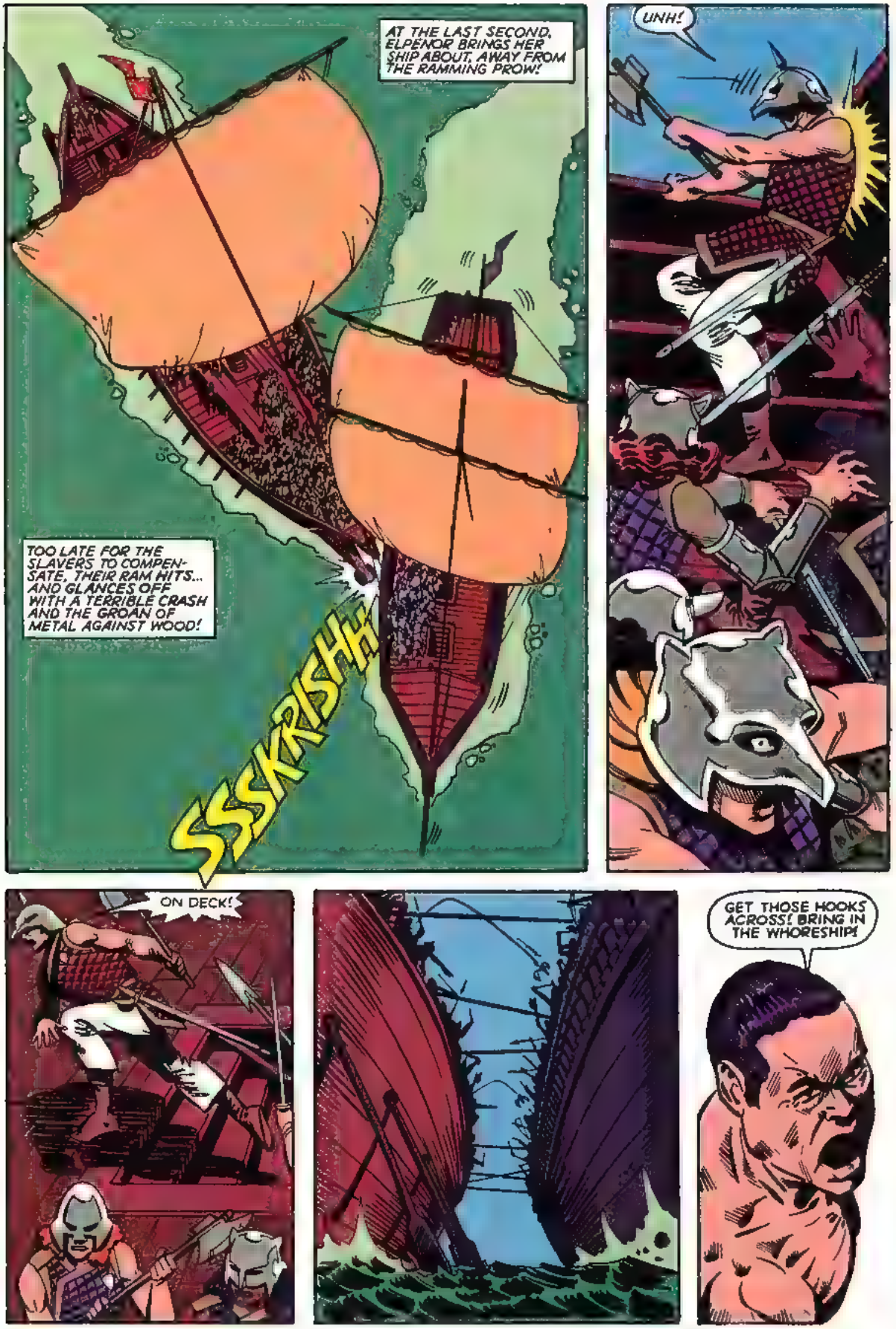

SIX YEARS, TO BE EXACT! I WAS 11! ONE OF MY TRAINERS DECIDED MY BEST FRIEND, KELKI, WASN'T GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME! THEY GAVE ME YOU, INSTEAD! ALL YOU EVER DID WAS SCOWL!
YOU WEREN'T EXACTLY WARM AND WONDERFUL YOURSELF! YOU THINK I WANTED TO LEAVE MY GROUP OF FRIENDS FOR THE PLEASURE OF YOUR BAD TEMPER?
YOU MIGHT HAVE TRIED BEING NICE!
YEAH LIKE YOU TRIED!
I DIDN'T START IT!
WELL, IT WASN'T MY FAULT!
I DON'T GIVE A PIG'S FART WHO STARTED IT!
SINCE YOU YOUNG LADIES HAVE SO MUCH ENERGY, YOU CAN SPEND IT CLEANING THE CHICKEN COOPS.
BALK BALK
BALK-BAK-BALK!
FOR THE NEXT TWO WEEKS!
GODDESS, IT STINKS!
YUCK!
HEY!
SPLAT!
SPLUTT!!
SMECK!!!

FLUP!! WHAPP!! SMOOLLPP!! SPLAPP!! FLOOMSH!!!
YEEEEEEE-YUUCCKK!!!!
HEY, DON'T!
WHAT'S THE MATTER? YOU COVERED WITH THAT STUFF. OR MADE OF IT?
IT'S A MIRACLE I DIDN'T DROWN!
MIRACLE, MY ASS! WHO DO YOU THINK PULLED YOU OUT?


YOU DID?
DON'T YOU REMEMBER?
Umm.. NO
ANYWAY, YOU AREN'T *REALLY* GOING TO HOLD A GRUDGE AFTER ALL THIS TIME..
..ARE YOU?
SISTERS ON DECK! STAND TO READINESS!
CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!
DEFINITELY A SLAVER SHIP!
IT'S A GIAOURAN SHIP, BUT NOT A SLAVE GALLEY! IT'S ONE OF THEIR FIGHTING SHIPS!
IS IT PIRATES?
THEY *COULD* SIMPLY BE CROSSING OUR PATH.
SLAVERS!
I'VE GOT TO ASSUME THE WORST! AND US WITH A LOAD OF RAW RECRUITS, GODDESS HELP US!
WE WERE *ALL* CADETS ONCE! THEY KNOW THEIR DUTY!
I FOUGHT PIRATES WHEN THE DRUG OF THE BRAMBLE-FLOWER SENT MY SPIRIT ACROSS THE SEA, AND I TOOK OVER KELKI'S BODY! BUT THAT WAS LIKE A DREAM! THIS IS *REAL*!
I WANT THE ARCHERS IN DOUBLE-LINE!
MEKITA, TAKE CHARGE OF THE CADETS!
AYE, CAPTAIN

ALRIGHT, CADETS, I KNOW IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE YOUR LAST SEA TRAINING! REMEMBER YOUR BASICS ON FIGHTING IN *CONFINED* AREAS!
WEAR AS LITTLE ARMOR AS POSSIBLE! IT'LL DRAG YOU UNDER IF YOU UNDER IF YOU GO OVERBOARD! KEEP YOUR FORMATIONS *TIGHT!* THE GIAOURANS WILL TRY TO SEPARATE YOU!
THEY'LL GO AFTER ONE OR TWO FOR PRISONERS AND TRY TO KILL THE REST OF US! WE'LL BE FIGHTING A BATTLE OF DEFENSE, DISENGAGE AND ESCAPE, SO *NO HEROICS!*
MAYBE THIS ISN'T WHAT YOU WERE EXPECTING, BUT IT'S UP TO US TO SHOW THE SLAVERS THAT *NO* WOMAN OF THE SISTERHOOD CAN BE TAKEN LIGHTLY...OR EASILY!
FIGHT WELL, SISTERS! FIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE AND FREEDOM!
ON DECK, THE EXPERIENCED SISTERS OF THE SEA STAND READY AND WAITING.
THERE'S NO LONGER ANY DOUBT OF THE GIAOURANS' INTENTIONS! THEIR RAMMING PROW RUSHES FOR THE SHIP'S MIDSECTION!


WHEN I GIVE THE COMMAND, GET UP AND KEEP MOVING! DON'T BLOCK THE STAIRS!
BRACE YOURSELVES FOR RAMMING!
GODDESS, SAVE ME FROM DROWNING!
GODDESS, DON'T LET ME BE MAIMED! LET ME DIE FIRST!
PROTECT ME, GODDESS-LADY.
GIVE ME STRENGTH TO KILL MY ENEMIES!
FIRST LINE.. FIRE!
SWIIIPPP
SHOOOSHH
TSSHHH
SECOND LINE.. FIRE!
GYAH!
YIEE!
HARD ABOUT!


AT THE LAST SECOND, ELPENOR BRINGS HER SHIP ABOUT, AWAY FROM THE RAMMING PROW!
TOO LATE FOR THE SLAVERS TO COMPENSATE. THEIR RAM HITS... AND GLANCES OFF WITH A TERRIBLE CRASH AND THE GROAN OF METAL AGAINST WOOD!
SSSKRISHH
UNH!
ON DECK!
GET THOSE HOOKS ACROSS! BRING IN THE WHORESHIP!

GRAPPLING LINES ARE THROWN FASTER THAN THE SISTERS CAN CUT THEM!
THE GIAOURANS POUR ACROSS!
THEY'RE CUTTING THROUGH THE SEA-SISTERS!
AAAHH!
FOR A HEARTBEAT, THIS GIRL-WARRIOR FREEZES BEFORE THE HATE-FILLED FACE OF HER ENEMY!
THEN ALL THOUGHT FLEES AND BORONWË STRIKES!
SISTERHOOD!

DINDRA HURLS HER SHIELD TO HER SWORDMATE'S DEFENSE!
OVER THERE! GRAB THOSE TWO! HURRY IT UP!
THEY MEAN US!
I KNOW! FIGHT!
BORONWË! MY SWORD!
NOOO!
THEY'VE GOT US BLOCKED OFF!
THEY HAVEN'T GOT US YET! KEEP YOUR HEAD!

WATCH HER SWORD!
I'VE GOT IT!
I'VE GOT HER!
I VE GOT PART OF HER!
LET UP A BIT, MATES, BEFORE THEY SUFFO--
--CAGH!
GET OFF MY SISTERS, YOU SCUM!
THE MERRY WIDOW-MAKER, AMBYRE IS CALLED!
AND WITH GOOD REASON!
D-DID YOU SEE THA--
NEVER MIND! GET YOUR SWORD! GET UP! HELP HER!

MEKITA METHODICALLY WORKS HER WAY ALONG THE RAILING!

CAPTAIN! THAT'S THE LAST ONE! WE'RE FREE!

CAPTAIN...

THE SHIP IS ADRIFT! GET BACK! BACK!

DRIVEN BY A MAD IMPULSE..

...THE GIAOURANS DIVE FOR THEIR SHIP!

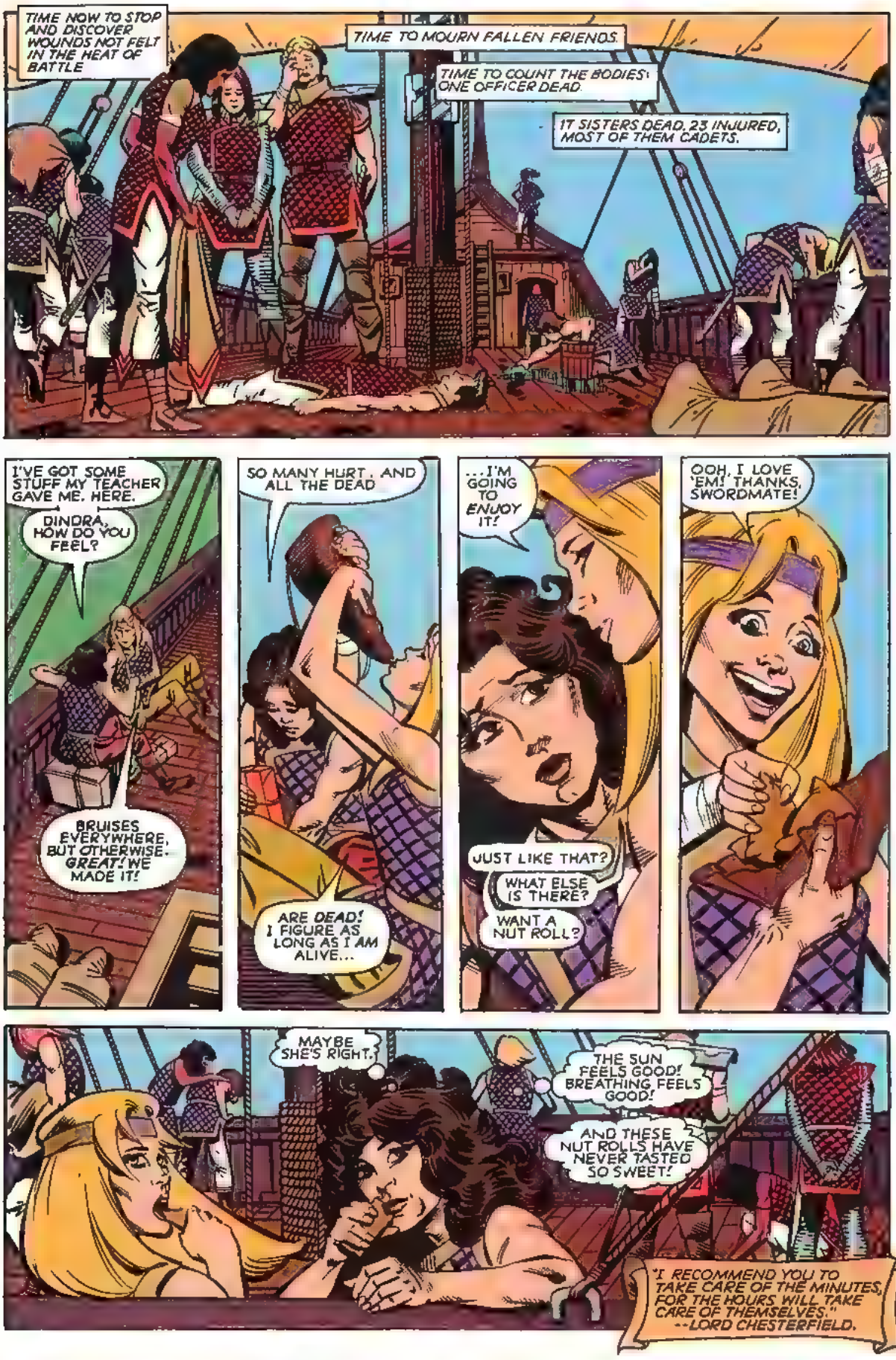
THE SISTERHOOD SHIP CATCHES THE WIND AND GAINS SPEED...

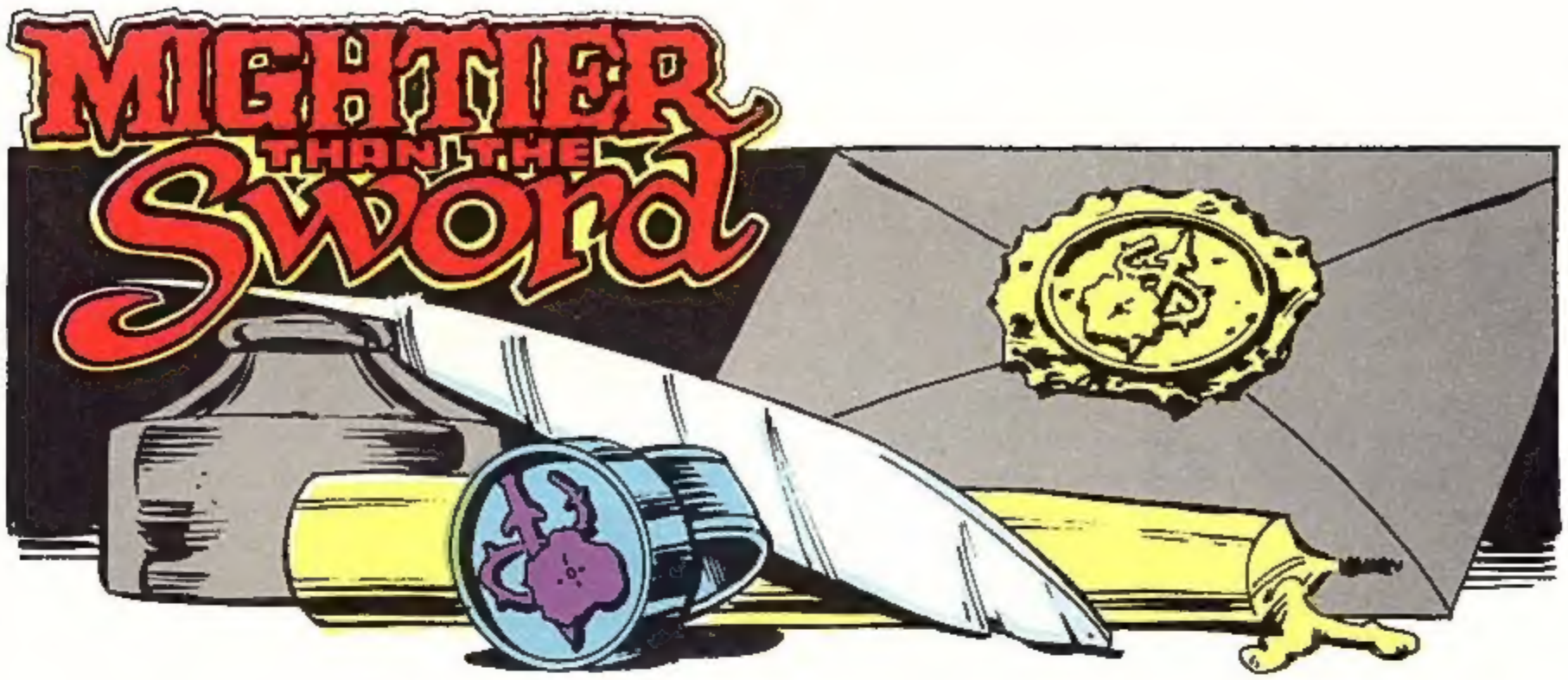
...WHILE THE GIAOURANS FLOUNDER IN DISORDER!

TIGHTEN THOSE SHEETS! HOLD THIS COURSE UNTIL WE'RE WELL AWAY!

GUTLESS BUNCH, WEREN'T THEY?

THEY DID ENOUGH, AMBYRE. THEY DID ENOUGH


TIME NOW TO STOP AND DISCOVER WOUNDS NOT FELT IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE
TIME TO MOURN FALLEN FRIENDS.
TIME TO COUNT THE BODIES: ONE OFFICER DEAD.
IT SISTERS DEAD, 23 INJURED, MOST OF THEM CADETS.
I'VE GOT SOME STUFF MY TEACHER GAVE ME. HERE.
DINDRA, HOW DO YOU FEEL?
BRUISES EVERYWHERE, BUT OTHERWISE. GREAT! WE MADE IT!
SO MANY HURT, AND ALL THE DEAD
ARE DEAD! I FIGURE AS LONG AS I AM ALIVE...
...I'M GOING TO ENJOY IT!
JUST LIKE THAT?
WHAT ELSE IS THERE?
WANT A NUT ROLL?
OOH, I LOVE 'EM! THANKS, SWORDMATE!
MAYBE SHE'S RIGHT.
THE SUN FEELS GOOD! BREATHING FEELS GOOD!
AND THESE NUT ROLLS HAVE NEVER TASTED SO SWEET!
"I RECOMMEND YOU TO TAKE CARE OF THE MINUTES, FOR THE HOURS WILL TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES." --LORD CHESTERFIELD.



Dear People,

I found the first issue of **Sisterhood of Steel** to be one full of potential, and am looking forward to watching what you do with it. Before I make any further comments on the story itself, I would like to point out a couple of minor problems I saw in the artwork.

On page 8 in the bottom left-hand panel, Mayal is shown with a left hand attached to her right arm. I looked twice when I saw this, and sure enough the thumb is definitely jointed in the wrong direction. And on page 15, in the bottom right panel, there is a slightly greater problem. Being a formerly intense archer, I was a little put off to see the technique, or rather the lack thereof, displayed. First of all, the arrow is on the wrong side of the bow. Think of the extra time involved in notching a shaft on that side. And of course, Boronwë is not drawing the arrow fully. Perhaps she has not yet pulled the string fully to her chin and ear, but it looks more like she's already drawn it as far as she intends.

Getting back to the story, I think you did a pretty good job of disseminating the background information. That is usually where early issues bog down, as they get too intent on narrating and lose the thread of action. On page 26, when you tell of the women slaying their captors, you mention rather glibly "the night's red fury." I don't know about anyone else, but I brought to mind the scene of slaughter from Euripides' **The Bacchae** when the women tear the men into tiny pieces. Yeee-uck.

I think you have created an interesting world with many interesting characters. I do however have a question about the selecting of a Queen of Swords. In appendix 2, it is stated that it is an elected office, but later it is said that a Q of S can choose her own successor subject only to approval by the Matrix, of which she herself is one-third. That doesn't sound like much of an election. Please clarify the workings of Queen succession.

Well, I'd better stop here before I get into a really long letter. Good luck with the **Sisterhood.**

Sivan S. Wall
Lincoln, NE

What's wrong with a really long letter? I appreciate letters with specific, constructive and interesting questions.

As someone who loves archery (though I have little time to devote to it), I try to keep the archery correct. Take a closer look at that panel and you'll see that the arrow is on the correct side of the bow. As for Boronwë's position, let us assume we've caught her midway in her pull, bearing in mind that every archer draws to a different position.

Someday we may get around to telling the full story of Ataluma's takeover. It's far more complex than we could get across in a number of flashbacks. There's also a skill to conveying images of horror by doing them indirectly. As you've indicated, you conjured up your own images of what occurred when the women fought back. This is often more effective than showing the violence up front. Take this classic scene from an old silent movie starring Douglas Fairbanks (the title eludes me at the moment)—pirates have caught a number of rich captives. The Pirate Captain sees one of the captives swallow a precious ring. He sends one of his cutthroats over, but the camera remains on the Captain, waiting. A moment later, the cutthroat returns, his knife bloody, and hands the ring to the Captain. The images of what just took place off-screen are filled in within the minds of the audience. Now that's effective, but subtle, storytelling.

About the Queen's succession: when was the last time you tried to explain the electoral college to a foreigner in 25 words or less? (I've tried. It's nearly impossible.) The succession is a complicated process that is a mixture of favoritism, politics, and merit. Actually, I made a mistake in my copy for Appendix #2. That line in the third paragraph should have read, "...may choose her successor, but the successor must be approved by the Matrix and both Houses.*" The Queen has the right to select her choice to be Queen, but her choice must be approved by, or can be overturned by the Houses. There will be more on this complicated process in upcoming issues. No point in giving it all away now.*

Well, I'd better stop here before I get into a really long reply!

Dear Editor,

Hurrah for the **Sisterhood of Steel**! At long last I find a comic book that presents strong women without apology. Red Sonja came close, but she is always with men. I particularly like the way female bodies are presented. They actually show muscle! That is rare for female comic book characters. I would like to see some body hair though. Women in ancient times, (and until fairly recently) did not consider body hair ugly. I think showing hairy arms and legs would be a big step forward for the comic book world. I also liked that you didn't present the women in very skimpy, impractical fighting gear, such as the Amazons in DC's **Wonder Woman,** and many other mags. I often wonder if the people who draw those costumes have any knowledge of the female body and how difficult it would be to fight while constantly worrying about one's top falling down.

Another thing I liked; the brief mention on page 4 of the possibility that Boronwë and Kelki might be lovers. I'm glad somebody has the idea that love between two women is possible, and not at all undesirable. I would like to see this expanded upon, if you think the comic world could take such an idea. (Or even if it can't.)

So keep up the good work. Please don't have Boronwë or any main character fall for a man and abandon everything. Kelki has already done that, and I get extremely tired of seeing that plot line. And don't make it look like female leaders are even worse than male leaders. Vandalis seems to be leaning that way. I hope other characters will not all do that. Plots and characters in comics often are shallow and one sided, but things seem to be shaping up well here. One final thing in the remarks by Marx, she mentions that she wants a comic book to appeal to male and female readers alike. (Note placement of words.) Why not just females? And I don't mean a character like Dazzler or Barbie dolls! I mean good strong feminist characters! There's quite an audience for those kinds of characters out here if you look for it. Send notices to women's bookstores! I'd be interested to hear your response to my letter—especially Christy Marx.

Jeanne Papish
Minneapolis, MN

I don't think Mike or I have given a lot of thought to body hair on our Sisters. I tend to agree with you, and I'll point out that some countries still consider body hair on women to be extremely sexy. Goddess knows, shaving would be one of the least of their concerns. I've always thought Conan should be a lot hairier.

Mike and I have spent a lot of time worrying over their uniforms. I'm trying very hard to make the Sisterhood real, which means thinking out the practical realities. There's a certain minimum amount of protection they require, but they couldn't carry around a lot of heavy armor the way a man could and still remain fresh for fighting. Protection vs. lightness is a trade-off warriors have had to make over the ages. There's a Roman report of Celts fighting in nothing more than body paint and erections.

In line with making the Sisterhood real, there would be no way to have an isolated society of women such as this without an outlet for sex, and it would be natural for a segment of them to turn to other women for love. Within the Sisterhood, it is simply an accepted alternative, neither encouraged nor discouraged.

Tired of that plotline?! Jeez, I only used it once! Boronwë is not Kelki. It was natural for Kelki, with her weaknesses as a warrior and her great love for Vossë, to run away from a hopeless future. Boronwë's situation is quite different.

As for Vandalis, keep an eye on her. She's an angel compared to Andras of the Slavers!

Why did I appeal to male and female readers alike? Because if Mike and I had to depend on solely a female readership, we'd be out of business. The fact is that the vast percentage of comic book readership is still male, and if we can't appeal to that readership, this book will fail. That is the reality.

Like you, I thought women's bookstores would be a natural idea. I personally went to one such place in LA. I left an issue for the owners to look at, along with a cover letter. They never bothered to answer me, and when I called, some unknown person told me they weren't interested. I asked for the owners to do me the courtesy of returning my call to give me some direct feedback, some reason for the rejection. They never bothered. It's left a sour taste in my mouth. As far as I'm concerned, they're nothing more than elitist snobs who look down their noses at "comic books". This is yet another barrier that all of us in the field have to overcome. If anyone out there can convince a women's bookstore or any kind of unorthodox outlet to carry **The Sisterhood,** *I'll do everything I can to carry through on the recommendation and promote that outlet. All they have to do is contact Marvel and ask for the Direct Sales Department. It's impossible for me with my limited time and on my own limited funds, to do this sort of thing myself, but with a little help from our readers, who knows what we could achieve?*

Dear Christy Marx,

I found your cover of **The Sisterhood of Steel** irresistible when I saw it. Looks like you've woven quite an involving plot.. Only one comment though about what seems to be but was not. You've certainly colored the book lavender, yet I saw only one caption allude to lesbianism and that caption denied anything between Kelki and Boronwë. I don't know if you're trying to attract straight readers as well as gay or vice-versa. I know Marvel is too well-known a name to challenge homophobia (I read how Cloud miraculously transformed into a boy because she loved Moondragon in **New Defenders**), but I hope Epic is more daring. In any case, I will watch future issues with great interest.

Jennifer Lin
Cambridge, MA

You intrigue me, Jennifer. Is there a connection between lavender and lesbians? Mike and I ran through quite a range of colors for their uniforms. I had a particular blue-purple-in mind, which is the color of the bramble-flower which plays such a quiet, but significant role in the history of the Sisterhood. In the colors available to us in the four-color process, this was the closest we could get.

To reiterate what I said in my reply to the above letter, we need all the readers we can get! Mike and I will only be able to survive and continue doing the **The Sisterhood** *if it sells. I don't care if our readers are straight, gay, bent, or chartreuse, as long as they support and enjoy the series.*

Greetings,

Thank you for one of the most interesting new books I've seen. I was immediately pulled into the story, and pleased at how deftly the rich background was introduced. It's an interesting world you've created, and without a monster in sight. The art is top-notch; clear, crisp and well laid-out. I look forward to upcoming issues.

Kathirene N. Smith
Burlington Township, NJ

Thanks for the kind words. On the other hand...

Dear Archie,

I found **Sisterhood of Steel** a disappointment. It is difficult to judge a writer's initial effort, as she is usually more concerned with establishing a premise for the series than telling a story. Perhaps this is why the story's form resembled the listings in the appendixes. Christy Marx has delineated her imaginary world in great detail, but she has yet to demonstrate that she can write interesting fiction. There was nothing in **Sisterhood of Steel #1** that would make me want to read **SOS #2.** Certainly not the art! It was crude and unrefined; Mike Vosburg has obviously had little practice at drawing women. **SOS** is undeserving of its expensive baxter format.

Charles Van Meter, Jr
Greer, SC

Pay no attention, Archie!

Dear Christy and Mike,

Here's what I think about the **Sisterhood of Steel...**It's great!!!

The art, overall, was stunning (with but a few small things wrong...) but what really impressed me...the writing... Ildana, the Sisterhood, the Matrix...it is all so marvelously well thought out.

Keep each issue as good as this, and you've a reader for life!

William Moschke
Grand Rapids, MI

I hereby dub thee Reader for Life.

Dear Christy and Mike,

Concerning **The Sisterhood of Steel:**

I love it! I love it!

But one query. (There always is one.)

Why must all the women, save Kelki and Boronwë, have such masculine features? I don't mind their bodies being buff (they are soldiers, after all), but we women aren't that harsh featured now, are we?

Enough of criticism.

Good luck and success with **The Sisterhood!**

I am eagerly awaiting # 2.

Lor Cadena
Redondo Beach, CA

I think Mike does a great job of creating a wide variety of character looks and types. What do you think of Dindra?

Dear Christy and Mike,

I congratulate you on your fantastic work on the **Sisterhood of Steel #1!** I fell in love with Boronwë, the girl on the cover of the book. Seeing that gorgeous girl fighting with the sword in her hand reminds me of Red Sonja. I suppose even Conan himself would probably think twice before taking her on!

The story was fantastic. The art was fantastic, too. Kelki's pretty hot stuff! She will be in issue #2, won't she? You know, the front cover could be a poster. I'll take a dozen! Keep up the good work, and the same artist. Once more, I congratulate you fellas on your tremendous work. See you in 60 days!

Arcelio Rodriguez, Jr.
Bronx, NY

Boronwë says to meet her at the Golden Girdle next issue, hot stuff.

GREYAN, PRIESTESS OF SWORDS

The dark power of the Sisterhood resides in the Priestess, she who walks in darkness and knows all the secret paths and tunnels of Ildana. Greyan was taken from her regular military training at the age of 9 when she became a Daughter of Death. For the many years that followed, she learned all the methods of creating and utilizing drugs and poisons, knowledge that has been passed down through the Daughters, from Priestess to Priestess since the time of Ataluma, first Queen of the Sisterhood.

She learned also the arts of silent death, of stalking, of moving in the night like a cloud across the moon. Through rituals never shared outside the Daughters, she sought to control and expand her small command of sorcerous powers. Though she showed less promise with these powers than others, she became Priestess because of her intelligence and political insight.

Though Vandalis scorns the current Priestess for her lack of mystical power, there are none in the Sisterhood so foolish as to take her lightly in any other respect.